

CLAIMS:

1. A CTP system using one multi-cassette unit (MCU) for feeding two imaging units, comprising:
 - two imaging units;
 - 5 two plate-loading positions, each said plate-loading positions adapted to supply plates for a respective one of said imaging units; and
 - an MCU comprising a plurality cassettes, each cassette holding a plurality of plates, each said cassettes movable to any one of said two plate-loading positions; .
- 10 2. The system of claim 1, wherein said cassettes are stacked vertically in said MCU.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein said two plate-loading positions are positioned on two opposite sides of said MCU.
4. The system of claim 1, wherein each said cassettes is additionally
15 movable to a plate-filling position.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein each said plate-loading positions is adjacent a respective plate-registration station; and
each said plate-registration stations is adjacent one of said imaging units.
- 20 6. The system of claim 5, wherein said two plate-registration stations additionally comprise respective punching mechanisms.
7. The system of claim 1, wherein said plurality of plates in each said cassettes is of a single size.
8. The system of claim 1, wherein said CTP device comprises an external
25 drum.

9. A CTP system using two MCUs for feeding one imaging unit, comprising:
an imaging unit;
two MCUs, each comprising a plurality of cassettes,
each cassette holding a plurality of plates, each said cassettes movable in at
5 least one direction to a plate-loading position; and
a plate-loading position for receiving cassettes from said two MCUs.
10. The system of claim 9, wherein said cassettes are stacked vertically in
each said two MCUs.
11. The system of claim 9, wherein said at least one direction comprises
10 opposite directions for said two MCUs.
12. The system of claim 9, wherein each said cassettes is additionally
moveable to a plate-filling position.
13. The system of claim 9, wherein said plate-loading position is adjacent a
15 plate-registration station; and
said plate-registration station is adjacent said imaging unit.
14. The system of claim 13, wherein said plate-registration station additionally
comprise a punching mechanism.
15. The system of claim 9, wherein said plurality of plates in each said
20 cassettes is of a single size.
16. The system of claim 9, wherein said CTP device comprises an external
drum.
17. A method of providing enhanced productivity in a CTP system, comprising
the steps of:

providing two CTP systems, each said systems comprising a plate-loading position and an imaging unit;

providing an MCU comprising a plurality of cassettes, each cassette holding a plurality of plates, each said cassettes movable in a first and second
5 directions to the respective two plate-loading positions;

transferring a first cassette to the plate-loading position of a first one of said imaging units;

picking a plate from said transferred first cassette and transferring said picked plate to said first imaging unit; and

10 transferring a second cassette to the plate-loading position of a second one of said imaging units,

wherein said transferring a second cassette may be done any time following said step of transferring a first cassette.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein said cassettes are stacked vertically in
15 said MCU.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein said two plate-loading positions are positioned on two opposite sides of said MCU.

20. The method of claim 17, wherein each said cassettes is additionally movable to a plate-filling position.

20 21. The method of claim 17, wherein said step of transferring said picked plate comprises the steps of:

transferring said picked plate to a registration station for accurately registering said plate with respect to said imaging unit; and

25 transferring said registered plate from said registration station to said imaging unit.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein said registration station additionally comprises a punching mechanism and additionally comprising the step of punching said plate after registration.
23. The system of claim 17, wherein said plurality of plates in each said
5 cassettes is of a single size.
24. The method of claim 17, wherein said CTP device comprises an external drum.
25. A method of providing a large amount of different-sized plates in a CTP device, comprising the steps of:
- 10 providing a CTP system, said system comprising a plate-loading position, and an imaging unit;
- providing two MCUs, each comprising a plurality of cassettes, each cassette holding a plurality of plates, each said cassettes movable in two directions;
- 15 searching said two MCUs for a cassette holding a required plate size;
- transferring said cassette from said MCU to said plate-loading position;
- and
- picking a plate from said transferred cassette and transferring said picked plate to said imaging unit.
- 20 26. The system of claim 25, wherein said cassettes are stacked vertically in said MCU.
27. The system of claim 25, wherein said two MCUs are positioned on two opposite sides of said imaging unit.
28. The system of claim 25, wherein each said cassettes is additionally
25 movable to a plate-filling position.

29. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of transferring said picked plate to said imaging unit comprises the steps of:

transferring said picked plate to a registration station, for accurately
5 registering said plate with respect to said imaging unit; and
transferring said registered plate from said registration station to said
imaging unit.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein said plate-registration station additionally
comprises a punching mechanism and additionally comprising the step of
10 punching said plate after registration.

31. The system of claim 25, wherein said plurality of plates in each said
cassettes is of a single size.

32. The method of claim 25, wherein said CTP device comprises an external
drum.

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